

PERSONAL BRANDING OF ATHLETES:

Examining the factors influencing the personal brand equity of an athlete on social media

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International Business
Bachelor's Thesis
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Objectives

The main objectives of this study were to examine the effects of different factors on the personal brand equity of an athlete. More specifically, the presence of high and low levels of attractiveness, athletic performance and marketable lifestyle in an athlete brand on social media were evaluated in terms of their influence on brand image and brand awareness.

Summary

Athlete branding is increasingly becoming more relevant, and athletes are nowadays expected to be entertainers and accessible in many ways. Thanks to social media, many fans turn to different platforms to follow their favorite athletes and are looking for ways to relate and feel connected. There's value to creating strong relationships between athletes and fans, as well as a favorable athlete brand can be of great benefit when it comes to an athlete's success and relevance outside their sport, like sponsorships and endorsements, as well as post-career.

Conclusions

Respondents found those athletes with high levels of athletic performance and marketable lifestyle to be much more favorable than those with low levels. Attractiveness was found to have no significant effect on brand image. Brand awareness was greater with higher levels of all three variables. This allows for greater brand equity, which gives a competitive advantage to the athlete and increases their value in the industry and to sponsors.

Key words: Sports, Soccer, Branding, Social media, Consumer attitudes, Brand image, Brand awareness

Language: English

Grade:

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Branding as a concept has been around for ages, but the idea of personal branding has become increasingly prominent in the field of marketing. Professional sports have started to become a lot more commercialized as an industry, and athletes are no longer seen just as athletes, but also as entertainers, role models, commodities and public figures (Arai et al., 2013). This is why athletes are increasingly starting to focus on their personal brand, and good brand management practices are seen as necessary in order to maximize their marketing value (Arai et al., 2013). Good brand management is important with benefitting and maintaining any brand image, but this is especially true for people brands, as they can be much harder to control than more traditional brands of goods or services (Keller, 2013). The power of social media also plays a key role in the process of creating and building a personal brand, as it allows for more range than any other form of media, and athletes can use it to their advantage to reach millions of people and form more personal connections with their viewers and supporters (Holt, 2016). The ultimate goal is to build connections with consumers through a enjoyable and marketable brand image, build brand loyalty and brand awareness, which will ultimately increase the personal brand equity for the athlete, making them more valuable as an individual in their industry and more appealing to sponsors.

A example of an athlete that has successfully benefitted from their strong personal brand, especially through presence in the media, is David Beckham. Beckham had a quite successful career as a soccer player, but researches argue that without his media persona, the brand equity from his professional career would not have lasted (Fischer and Parmantier, 2020). Most can agree that you don't need to be a die-hard soccer fan to know who David Beckham is. He has successfully transformed from an athlete to a celebrity through different formats of media, including him amongst the most famous and well-paid people in the world (Fischer and Parmantier, 2020).

Some more examples of strong personal athlete brands include basketball players like Michael Jordan, LeBron James, and Kobe Bryant. They have all been extremely successful during their careers and made a name of themselves in that way. Compared to

Beckham who rose more into popularity after his career, these three have used their on the field success to influence their off the field success by using their face and name to create, for example, clothing lines and shoe collections.

Overall, social media provides a unique opportunity for “behind the scenes” content of an athlete’s life, which includes more intimate and personal moments of their everyday life. Communication is also significant, and direct communication with fans can be highly beneficial when it comes to loyalty to the athlete brand (Green, 2016). This area of research is important, as the sports industry can be seen as highly saturated, so a unique personal brand of an athlete can be a way in distinguishing themselves from the competition and create better chances for success during their career and after.

1.2 Research Objectives and Questions

The objective of this research is to determine what and how different factors have an effect on an personal athlete brand on social media and how these qualities can increase their personal brand equity, more specifically brand image and brand awareness. Relating to brand image, how consumer’s would view the athlete’s endorser image will also be researched to some extent.

1. How will attractiveness, athletic performance, and a marketable lifestyle influence the brand equity of a personal athlete brand?
2. Will different levels of attractiveness, athletic performance and marketable lifestyle create for differing brand images and levels of brand awareness?
3. Will strategic athlete personal branding influence the value of an athlete brand to sponsors?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The objective of this literature review is to explore the theories surrounding personal branding which can be applied to an athlete's presentation of their personal brand on social media. More specifically, the following aims to form an understanding of the importance of personal branding for athletes and how content on social media platforms can add value to the brand as a whole and benefit an athlete's career. This literature review is divided into several parts. First, the review will define the concept of a personal brand and an athlete brand. Second, brand equity will be discussed. Within that, brand awareness and brand image will be defined and their potential for creating value to an athlete's brand is outlined. Third, the significance of social media in today's world of marketing and branding will be assessed. Fourth, the value of a strong athlete brand for sponsors will be evaluated in order to justify how branding can lead to career advancement. Fifth, the model athlete brand image framework is introduced, which outlines a suggested strategy for personal branding for athletes. Lastly, the literature review will conclude by summarizing the discussion and establishing the gaps found in research, as well as with an outline of the conceptual framework to be used in this thesis.

2.2 Personal branding

As one of the leading theorist on modern-day branding, Aaker (2014) defines a brand as a promise. He considers there to be a promise behind the name and the logo to its customers to deliver what the brand stands for and what its core values are. His branding theories consider brands to be the key to forming customer relationships by providing perceptions and experiences with every single customer connection. The interaction consumers have with brands are vital, as they will be the leading factors towards brand success, which includes customer loyalty, transferability, and overall business success (Aaker, 2014). On the other hand, Keller (2013) considers anything with a name and a logo as a brand, but he also states that a brand has to create awareness and a reputation. Overall, both authors consider a brand as having to have distinct enough features to distinguish it from those brands surrounding it (Aaker, 2014; Keller, 2013).

Although the previously mentioned theories focus on traditional brands within a company, the ideas can be adapted to branding of individuals. The concept of self- or personal branding has been researched previously and it has raised support as well as criticism, but the idea has become increasingly relevant in the modern marketing world (Ang et al., 2016). Individuals standing to gain from creating a desirable image of themselves through branding include celebrities, politicians and other public figures, as they rely on relevancy and public approval (Keller, 2013). Ang et al. (2016, p.1) define self-branding as “individuals developing a distinctive public image for commercial gain and/or cultural capital.”.

2.2.1 Celebrity branding

The focus of this study relies on the value of people in the context of branding, so what we know today regarding celebrity branding and its possible pros and cons need to be discussed. With the rise of influencers, the opportunity of celebrities to leverage themselves as brands is ever increasing. In a way, they have become entrepreneurs for themselves, and the brand they have isn't necessarily about them, but rather what kind of ideas and practices they reflect onto others (Olenski, 2018).

Celebrity branding and endorsement as a marketing technique has been around for ages. Large companies like Coca-Cola have continuously used celebrities for marketing their products (Foong and Yazdanifard, 2014). The reason for why celebrity branding has become so significant is due to the value their personal brand brings to other brands who are using the individual to endorse their own products. According to Foong and Yazdanifard (2014), brands partnering up with celebrities can often face a nearly 20 percent jump in sales. In addition to this, the authors discuss a study conducted by Elberse and Verlun (2012), where sport celebrity endorsements used by over 300 brands were analyzed. The results showed that not only were these celebrities paid nearly four percent of the brand's yearly revenue, but the sales for the brand itself increased \$70,000 weekly when the endorser was performing well and winning. This research highlights the benefits that celebrity branding can bring. Not only is it profitable for a brand using celebrity endorsers, but as brand increasingly understand the value of celebrities,

successful individual branding can be a highly profitable source of income for the celebrity as brands are willing to make sizable investments towards this strategy of marketing.

There are some issues regarding personal and celebrity branding. According to Keller (2013), consistency amongst brands is regarded as one of the important key elements, which can be difficult to sustain as an individual. Public figures are often face to face with a scandal, and a brand relying on human behavior is relatively harder to manage than a brand supporting a product. One can remember the scandals surrounding star athlete's like Tiger Woods, Michael Phelps and Lance Armstrong, which caused temporary financial damage to their endorsers as well as the individual athletes (Sasse, 2020). Additionally, it stained their reputation, at least for a brief period of time.

Overall, the idea of self-branding can be criticized for ethical reasons by researches like Ang et al. (2016), as it is prevailing the idea that people need to be branded in order to reach their full potential. Modern research can agree on the fact that despite the challenges, personal branding can be highly influential, especially in the age of social media (Ang et al., 2016; Hodge & Walker, 2015).

2.3 Defining an athlete brand

In sports, brands are often names or logos that relate to a specific sport organization and distinguish it from others. Individual athletes can also be brands, as they have a name and possibly a distinct look, skill or persona that separates them from the rest. How they can do this is the major focus of this thesis. Arai et al. (2014, p.98) define an athlete brand as "a public persona of an individual athlete who has established their own symbolic meaning and value using their name, face or other brand elements in the market.". The importance of a personal brand is the same as with any other type of brand; it provides a competitive advantage in the market (Keller, 2013).

An exemplary personal brand can be seen with Usain Bolt. Due to his athletic achievements, he has been labeled as the world's fastest man. He is also known for being authentic and energetic, which has created a positive image of him. When people think of the sport track and field or running, Usain Bolt is one of the first people to come to mind.

This means, his brand has a strong brand awareness and a positive association, which is what athlete brands should aim for. The reasoning for this is that he has efficiently created a brand around himself and his career by being consistent with his performances and maintaining his authenticity (Badenhausen, 2016). This strong personal brand has not only made people aware of his existence, but it has also landed him with plenty of endorsement deals to advance his career (Badenhausen, 2016). Especially after his world-record breaking performances, major brands like Puma, Gatorade and Visa, have actively used his personal brand in advertisement and creating new products (Badenhausen, 2016). Usain Bolt is the highest paid track athlete in the world, and his endorsement portfolio alone generates him anywhere between \$1-4 million annually (Badenhausen, 2016).

Celebrity branding has been discussed in the previous section, and similar concepts can be applied to athlete brands. Athletes often become celebrities, or have the potential to, and brands often use well-known and successful athletes in their marketing strategies as it gives them access to their widely spread and committed fan base and audience (Foong and Yazdanifard, 2014). The credibility created for athletes due to their performance also assures customers of the quality of products that they endorse, and therefore can have a significant effect on the sales of a company using athlete endorsers (Foong and Yazdanifard, 2014).

Maximized attention and support from fans on social media will make the athlete brand more valuable to sponsors, as their larger following will generate more revenue (Green, 2016). According to research done by Heinonen (2019), a noticeable amount of an athlete's income comes from sponsorships. This is why the comparison can be made that sponsorships for athletes can be seen as an equivalent of companies generating sales through their branded products. Heinonen (2019) also adds that an individual athlete will have a greater responsibility in sponsorships than a sports team and that individual athletes tend to attract more sponsorships, but they also come with quite a bit of risk. The author continues to say that their questionable behavior off the field in addition to bad performance on the field can damage the athlete's brand, and therefore simultaneously the sponsor's brand. Although they come with risk, the sponsoring of athletes is also an opportunity for high reward (Jensen, 2012). Not only does the athlete have the possibility of receiving a reasonable paycheck, the right sponsorships can create a rapid increase in sales and business for the sponsors (Jensen, 2012).

A good example of the benefits and possible downsides of companies using athlete brands in marketing is Nike. One of the most successful golf players in the world, Tiger Woods, is amongst the many athletes endorsed by Nike (Chung et al., 2013). According to Chung et al. (2013), since their 181 million dollar endorsement on Woods, 57% of this investment was recovered just through the rise in the sale of golf balls. Nike got huge brand exposure in the golf industry and Woods himself also received millions of dollars annually from this sponsorship deal, starting all the way from the year 1996, so one can imagine the amount of growth in revenue for both parties over the last 20 years. (Rishe, 2019). Tiger Woods has also had his share of scandals, including DUIs and infidelity. This had an effect on his personal brand image, as well as reflecting on to those brands he endorsed, like Nike (Rishe, 2019). Nevertheless, the brand continued the sponsorship of Woods due to the benefits the partnership was generating (Rishe, 2019). Obviously, not all athletes receive such high-level endorsements as Tiger Woods, but his case shows the true value athletes can have for sponsors and the athlete them self, and also the possible risks they can entail. Less well-known athletes might need to establish themselves in the sport first, but through personal branding, they can speed up the process of becoming a true competitor in their industry.

2.4 Brand equity

This thesis will attempt to explore how athlete brands can develop different aspects of their personal brand equity, so the concept should be discussed. When talking about brand equity, marketers usually refer to customer-based brand equity (Keller 2013; Aaker, 2014). Essentially, this refers to marketers wanting to create high levels of awareness for their brand, as well as favorable brand associations (Keller, 2013). A strong brand equity is highly desirable, as it will help to differentiate one brand from another and make the associations customers have with that brand unique (Keller, 2013; Aaker, 2014). Although these concepts have been highly researched regarding the branding of products and services, they are useful aspects to keep in mind when talking about a personal brand.

According to Keller (2013), in order to create long lasting success for a brand, they need to have to build their brand equity, which requires for the emotions of consumers to be

understood. He adds that marketers need to learn how to shape the subconscious thoughts and feelings of consumers toward their brand, as those will reflect onto the personal value consumers put on your brand. Brand equity should not be confused with brand value, which aims to measure the financial value of a brand, as brand equity attempts to focus more on the personal value a brand has for a consumer which is measured through the visibility, associations and loyalty that consumers have (Aaker, 2014).

The thoughts and emotions of consumers can be analyzed by marketers by looking at their brand at different levels, which include how well a brand understands how customers see their identity, how they communicate their meaning and what they stand for, how they manipulate the emotions customers have towards their brand, and how strong the relationship between the brand and the customer truly is (Modicum, 2017). As a determining factor of brand equity includes emotions, it makes it hard to control. If done successfully, a positive and strong brand equity can decrease a brand's vulnerability to competition and price changes in the market (Keller, 2013). If brand equity starts to suffer, the overall image and success of the brand will also tend to fall quite rapidly, and with social media where information is quickly and widely spread, the effects on the brand can be even more severe and harder to recover from (Modicum, 2017).

After looking at brand equity as a whole, discussion will be narrowed down to highlighting the theories surrounding brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness and brand image are known as sources of brand equity (Keller, 2013). The research in this thesis will consider how different dimensions of personal branding of athletes via content on social media can build greater brand awareness and brand image, and therefore increase the brand equity of the personal brand. The following sections will define the concepts and also discuss the value that they bring to a brand.

2.4.1 Brand awareness

As defined by Keller (2013), brand awareness has two parts to it; brand recognition and brand recall. He defines brand recognition as a consumer's ability to remember prior exposure to the brand and brand recall as a consumer being able to connect the brand when given a specific category. Keller (2013) also discusses the many advantages of

brand awareness, which, to summarize, deal with establishing a place in a consumers memory to affect the overall brand image positively, which then influences the consumer's decision-making in the purchasing process. Aaker (1995) adds that in order to create brand awareness, brands should operate outside traditional media channels to grab the attention of consumers.

In traditional branding, brand awareness is said to create value by creating strong relationships between brands and consumers and generating sales (Keller, 2013). According to Gamrot et al. (2018), brand awareness can be measured using three different measurements; spontaneous awareness, top of mind knowledge and supported awareness. The authors define the three measurements as the following. Spontaneous awareness indicates that consumers are able to recognize the brand without any assistance. Top of mind knowledge represents consumers recognizing a brand as the first one to come to mind when given a specific category. Supported awareness is the opposite of spontaneous awareness, and it is when consumers admit knowledge of a brand after it being mentioned by someone.

Another aspect that can influence brand awareness that will be tested in this study is word of mouth (WOM). Essentially, WOM is all about communication and passing on information and in marketing, it is something that plays an important role in advertising strategies to encourage consumers to discuss and, more importantly, recommend brands or products to others, like friends and family (Allsop et al., 2007). Kumar et al. (2007) argue that WOM brings great value to a brand, as it includes valuable and loyal customers bringing in new, profitable customers. They also add that all brands should encourage this communication between consumers, and make it easy for them to express positive recommendations regarding their products. Alternatively, Allstop et al. (2007) argues that while the benefits of this type of marketing can be extensive, the lack of control brands have in this communication can be threatening, as WOM is not always positive. Overall, brand awareness is how efficiently a brand is shaped into the minds of the consumers. The most significant value it can bring to a brand is the competitive advantage (Keller 2013). If a certain brand is the foremost though it the minds of consumers, the likelihood of them choosing that brand over another is much greater. High brand awareness will also be a valuable factor when it comes to consumer loyalty, meaning that consumers will most likely keep supporting and coming back to that brand. This can be

applied to personal branding. If an athlete brand has high brand awareness, it will separate them from a crowd where the athlete brands are very similar, as well as increase the amount of loyal fans and fan engagement in general.

2.4.2 Brand image

A positive brand image is key for brand success (Aaker, 2014). Brand awareness has an influence on brand image, but it is also about the brand attributes and benefits (Keller, 2013). According to Keller (2013), brand attributes are what characterize the brand itself, as the brand benefits are the value and meaning it brings to consumers. In general, a brand image is what a consumer sees and feels when associating with a brand, and brands should aim to create values that can be shared by their customers (Aaker, 2014).

Brand image deals with the image that is created in the minds of consumers when they come into contact with a brand (Keller, 2013). The theory of brand image recognizes the general attitudes consumers have towards a brand, and it is influenced by the unique features of a brand (Keller, 2013). Brand image can also be linked to brand identity, which is shaped consciously by consumers and deals more with the meaning and intentions of a brand, rather than just images or words that consumers associate with a brand (Gamrot et al., 2018).

Brand image can be much more than just visual aspects. It also deals with values and what kind of impression a consumer is left with after being exposed to your brand. A positive brand image will create positive brand equity, so it will add value (Keller, 2013). Some ways that a brand image can add value is through creating a good first impression, which will lead to positive brand associations in the future (Gamrot et al., 2018). Also, sharing the values that make up a brand will form a trusting relationship between you and the consumer, which in turn creates loyalty and credibility (Gamrot et al., 2018). As will be discussed later on, athlete's showcasing philanthropic activities, like charity work, often creates meaning behind the brand, which ensures a more prominent emotional connection between the athlete and their fans (Doyle et al., 2020).

Both brand awareness and brand image can act as key factors when it comes to determining the competitive advantage of a brand (Keller, 2013). Both of these variable

are most easily measured through survey studies, where researches are able to get results regarding how well consumers recognize and remember a brand, as well as what they associate the brand with (Gamrot et al., 2018).

2.5 Branding in the age of social media

Appel et al. (2019, p.80) defines social media as “a collection of software-based digital technologies”. Users can create a social network through different apps and websites, where they can receive as well as send different kinds of information in various forms (Colisev et al., 2018). Common examples are Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. Appel et al. (2019) also sees social media as a developing concept, as technology will continue to innovate. Social media will soon be integrated into all interfaces of mobile and desktop operating systems, which from a marketer’s perspective will be highly beneficial, as it will be present at all times in the consumer decision-making process (Appel et al., 2019). Social media is key for expanding networks, which can be seen as crucial when it comes to personal branding (Leppälä, 2020).

Researchers can come to an accord on one indispensable factor when it comes to branding on social media; the rise of influencers (Appel et al., 2019; Holt, 2016). Appel et al. (2019) define influencers as people with “high social value”, who have the power to influence the opinions of viewers. These often include celebrities, whose posts can be valued at millions of dollars and smaller brands, who simply cannot afford the exposure that high-end celebrities provide, use influencers with a smaller but very active following, also known as “micro-influencers” (Appel et al., 2019). Celebrity branding was discussed previously, and influencers are often considered as modern-day celebrities (Holt, 2016).

The success of influencers outlines how beneficial social media can be in terms of branding. Athletes have the opportunity to become their own version of an influencer, and use social media to their advantage in marketing themselves and developing their personal brand (Green, 2016). Social media allows for more range than any other marketing platform (Holt, 2016). Athletes can share more of their life than anywhere else, forming more personal connections with existing fans, as well as have greater opportunities to reach new fans (Green, 2016). In general, social media is made for

interaction, and athletes can use this to their advantage to strengthen the community around them.

The benefits that social media has also create some areas for caution. Managing the content an athlete posts in order to benefit and maintain their brand image is fairly easy, but content or comments posted by friends or family or anyone with an association to the athlete could have damaging effects on their professional reputation (Green, 2016). As was discussed previously when outlining the concept of brand equity, the power of social media can make the negative effects on a brand much greater than during a time before social media, and it makes recovery a difficult and lengthy process (Modicum, 2017).

Research shows why individuals might turn to social media to follow their favorite athletes, and these reasons include entertainment, connecting with other fans, knowledge of the sport, supporting a team, and communication (Green, 2016). Fans often want to share their opinions and communicate with other about a certain sport or athlete, and social media has provided an efficient platform for that. Research done by Biscaia et al. (2016) also shows that fans are more likely to keep supporting the athlete in the face of a scandal if a strong brand is present and they feel connected to them, as they will feel more favorable towards their favorite athlete. The authors conducted interviews with real-life fans, and found out that athlete brands have high potential to build fan loyalty by building a narrative on social media and becoming a hero of sorts to their fans.

This brings us to the phenomenon of word of mouth (WOM) that has been discussed previously, but its presence as online WOM. Gaining information has become noticeably easier with the rise of social media, making it easier for consumers to not only communicate with their close circle, but also with unknown people about a variety of different topics, like brands and people (Barreto, 2015). This can bring great opportunities for brands to increase their brand awareness as there are multiple channels and formats for consumers to communicate with each other on, allowing for multidirectional communication that basically anyone with internet has access on (Barreto, 2015). Again, the possible disadvantage of this is the wide-spread format of social media, where negative comments tend to spread even faster than positive ones, which can generate a real threat to a brands reputation (Green, 2016). Research has also showed that loyal consumers are more likely to engage in negative WOM when they are dissatisfied versus

in positive WOM when they are satisfied, as being satisfied is what they are used to (Barreto, 2015). This is something marketers should keep in mind when extending their marketing to different social media channels, and something athletes should look out for.

Amongst traditional social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook, the rise of platforms based on video creation have risen into popularity. YouTube has been one of the leaders in the market of video sharing for a long time, and they have provided the opportunity for self-expression and self-marketing, asserting themselves as the primary and desirable source for personal branding (Chen, 2013). Researches agree that YouTube is amongst the most suitable video platforms for personal branding, as viewers associate the videos by creators with words like authentic and enjoyable. (Tarnovskava, 2017; Chen 2013) Additionally, amongst sports fans, YouTube is the most used platform to watch videos (Lang, 2020).

Relating to the previous point, new platforms like TikTok are taking over social media. A study conducted found that the posts on TikTok by athletes are less frequent than on other major social media platforms, but it has been a key factor in establishing stronger fan engagement and provides fans with more relaxed, entertaining and authentic content, which in turn strengthens the relationship between the athlete brand and their consumers (Baker et al., 2020). Additionally, fitness and sports was the fourth most popular content category on TikTok last year, generating over 40 billion views in total (Tankovska, 2021), which insinuates its possible benefits for the world of sports.

Hoyer et al. (2011) discuss in their research that building an emotional brand attachment is vital in today's marketing, and these emotions can be complex and vary depending on a consumer's involvement. As building brand equity relies highly on monitoring the emotions of consumers toward a brand, providing content on these type of platforms that are overall found to be enjoyable and encourage the relationship between brands and consumer can be seen as highly beneficial for athletes to build their personal brand equity.

The research by Baker et al. (2020) also discusses the app's algorithm, which promotes grassroot content, which enhances the virality of the content produced there, adding a whole other dimension and value to branding and promoting branded content. A factor of brand equity is brand awareness, which focuses on recognition and recall (Keller, 2013).

The viral nature of social media can increase the exposure consumers have to brands and people, therefore increasing the chances for consumers to recognize and remember that specific brand in the future, increasing brand awareness (Baker et al., 2020).

2.6 Model of athlete brand image (MABI)

Athletes often view branding to only be an opportunity once they have become successful enough in their profession, or they rely on professional success to be the key to a continuous flow of endorsements and financial gain (Hodge and Walker, 2015).

Researches agree that athletes often face the challenge of not having enough knowledge in this area to know where to start, nor are they receiving enough support to create a strategy to build their own brand (Hodge & Walker, 2016; Doyle et al., 2020). Therefore, the associations regarding an athlete's brand should be explored by agents and managers in order to assist in transforming the athlete into a brand, or to strengthen their existing brand (Arai et al., 2014).

By not providing self-representation on different social media platforms, athletes can miss out on a significant opportunity to engage their fans and advance their career (Green, 2016). Jensen (2012) shows in his study that only a handful of sponsors receive promotion on live broadcasts, and therefore argue that the use of social media is also important in creating more brand awareness and exposure for the sponsors. Therefore, an athlete can be more attractive and valuable to sponsors if they have a strong personal brand on social media and an active following (Hodge and Walker, 2015).

Additionally, a strong individual brand can be significant post-career. According to Baker et al. (2019), the average career of a professional athlete ranges between five and ten years, depending on the sport. Their research also shows that with minimal injuries, the length of the career can be longer, but most contact sport athletes face career-ending injuries at some point or another, or ultimately their body can no longer perform at the appropriate level. Having built a strong brand, therefore, can act as a stepping stone for retired athletes into entrepreneurship or other career paths (Green, 2016).

Arai et al. (2014) introduce the model of athlete brand image (MABI) in their research. The conceptual model explores three different dimensions to an athlete's brand image; athletic performance, attractive appearance, and marketable lifestyle. These three dimensions will be adopted to the current study. With athletic performance, the authors refer to an athlete's achievements, capabilities, proficiency in their sport, competition with others, and sportsmanship-like behavior. Attractive appearance indicates the physical qualities and personal style that makes an athlete distinct or the viewers find esthetically pleasing. A marketable lifestyle should showcase an athlete's life off the field, including their personal lives, ethical behavior, and overall interactions and attitudes with spectators and media (Arai et al., 2014).

The model created by Arai et al. (2014) outlines the implications of an athlete brand in terms of consumer brand equity. By assessing these dimension specific to an athlete's personal brand, the authors state that managers and agents are able to discover the weaknesses and strengths within the brand and make the necessary adjustments. In relation to this thesis, the model can be incorporated into the content that athletes are posting on social media. The success of the three different dimensions in the posted content can then be analyzed in regards to how consumers react to them and consequently perceive the athlete brand.

2.6.1 Effects of MABI dimensions on brand awareness and brand image

In regards to the awareness of an athlete brand, their athletic performance and achievements can be seen as one of the most important factors. If consumers see an athlete succeeding in their field by winning games or breaking records, it will leave a mark in their minds and they will possibly associate that athlete with that sport in the future (Green, 2016). This could be seen when discussing Usain Bolt as an example. However, success can be defined as much more than simply just winning (Arai et al., 2014). Fans look for other qualities in an athlete in addition to what titles they've won, like their personal skills, virtuous behavior, and possible rivalries (Arai et al., 2014). These are qualities that can be showcased through social media, like posting "behind the scenes" footage, which could include, for example, short clips of training footage or collaborating with other athletes on social media (Baker et al., 2020).

Attractive appearance can work as a type of trademark for athletes and is significant when discussing brand image (Arai et al., 2014). Physical attractiveness can become a determining factor to stand out from the crowd, and can also be seen as a source of credibility for certain sport industries, like dance (Arai et. al 2014; Doyle et. al, 2020). Research shows, that consumers form better opinions about attractive people, and their communication can be more efficient (Arai et al., 2014). However, attractiveness doesn't need to be purely physical. In addition to body fitness, a unique or prominent sense of style can be enough to bring more awareness and distinct one from others (Arai et al., 2014). An example of this is Lewis Hamilton, who uses his Instagram to show off his flashy and expensive wardrobe, molding him into a fashion pioneer of sorts to some.

A marketable lifestyle is all about showcasing an athlete's lifestyle off-field, so outside the world of sports (Arai et al., 2014). Expressing a personal brand's life story or relationships makes a person more authentic and unique, as well as allows for a more personal connection between the brand and their consumers (Arai et al., 2014). Out of the MABI dimensions, this is the one that could be most easily controlled and altered (Arai et al., 2014). Doyle et al. (2020) recognizes these three dimensions. However, they add the idea of philanthropy, and argue that the promotion of philanthropic activities increases the positive perceptions around an athlete, especially when thinking of the marketable lifestyle category. The authors also discuss the social identity theory, and how individuals connect strongly with those who bring social benefits that they deem important (Doyle et al., 2020). Therefore, the ethical behaviors and overall contributions to society of an athlete can shape them into a role-model and provide a better brand image, and researches agree that people need role models (Arai et al., 2014; Doyle et al., 2020).

The research done by Doyle et al. (2020) outlines the possibilities of influencing brand image, as this type of philanthropic behavior can present the values and meaning of the athlete brand, which can be recognized and shared by consumers, therefore altering their perception. They also add that these philanthropic activities are best showcased through social media, as that way they can be exposed to a large audience. Through the results on their research, Doyle et al. (2020) proves that consumers place high-value regarding an athlete's overall brand, and that the promotion of philanthropic activities, like charity work, helps with character recall and makes for an overall, positive brand association.

2.7 Conclusion

The aim of this literature review was to describe and discuss prior and related research to the topic of this thesis. By going over existing theories relating to branding and more specifically, personal branding, the value of these concepts in marketing was made evident. Additionally, the ideas and theories behind branding on social media and how social media can be a suitable platform for branding due to its range of content and possibilities for virality were also discussed. This provided a necessary background as to why social media has become such a dominant channel for branding, and why the use of it should continue to expand and improve. Finally, the model of athlete brand image by Arai et al. (2014) was introduced, as it will act as a foundation for the research of this thesis. The value of athlete branding in regards to sponsorships and endorsements were also discussed, in order to provide invaluable and profitable reasons for this research in the field of international business.

Based on discussion of prior research, we can see that athlete branding is becoming a more and more relevant topic amongst marketers, especially as social media develops, but is not yet fully explored. The basic concepts have been researched, like why branding can be valuable for athletes and what the benefits of using social media as a channel for this are, but in some areas it lacks focus. The most recent research on athletes establishing a strong brand on social media is focused on why athletes should be engaging on social media and possibly what kind of content should they explore and provide. For this reason, a small gap in research has been recognized and made the aim of this thesis, which intends to discuss what different features of social media content is found most engaging and valuable by consumers, and how will this positively influence brand awareness and brand image, and therefore add value to the athlete brand.

2.8 Conceptual framework

The following conceptual framework aims to relate the topics discussed in this literature review to this thesis. The model is inspired by the MABI framework constructed by Arai et al. (2014), which has been implemented to the current framework. In their study, they introduced three different dimensions to assess an athlete's brand: athletic performance,

attractive appearance, and marketable lifestyle, which have been made the three independent variables of this study. The rest of the framework has been created in order to fit the scope of this research.

To understand the relationships in the conceptual framework, one can refer to the appropriate sections of the literature review of past research. To summarize, in order to positively affect the personal brand of an athlete, managers can benefit from implementing and analyzing the MABI dimensions in regards to an individual athlete. How the three dimensions can increase brand awareness and better the brand image has been discussed. It is argued that athletes can then apply these dimensions to their social media content, and this framework suggests that the presence of these dimensions in the social media content of athletes positively effects the personal brand equity of the athlete, focusing on brand awareness and brand image.

Brand awareness and brand image can be sources for brand equity, so added value. How these can add value has been discussed, and the research has agreed that the two factors can shift the perceptions consumers have of brands as well as influence their decision-making, which gives the brand a competitive advantage and therefore creates value (Keller, 2013). These ideas can be applied to personal brands, which is the focus of this framework. All in all, the following framework aims to outline the relationship between an athlete's posts on social media, which can include dimensions in the MABI framework, and personal brand equity, including brand awareness and brand image.

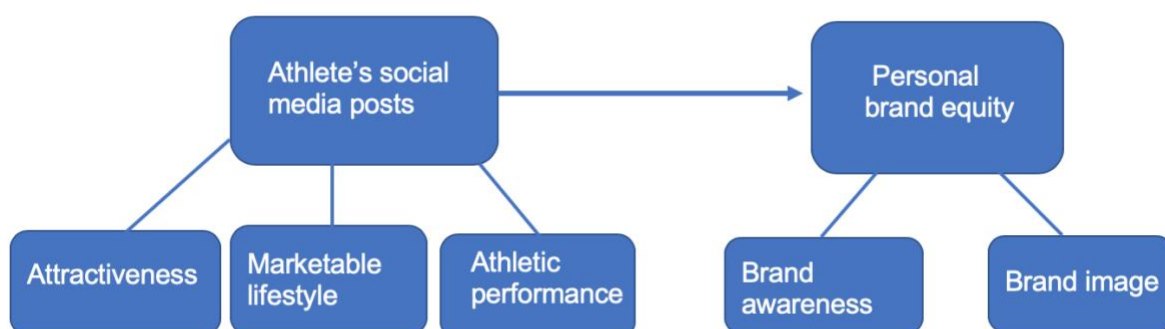


Figure 1. The conceptual framework, including theories of Arai et al. (2014)

3. RESEARCH APPROACH

The research done by Arai et al. (2014) provides evidence of how the three different dimensions of attractiveness, athletic performance and marketable lifestyle work in theory in conceptualizing an athlete brand. As the concept of an athlete image has been researched and established, the data collection of this thesis aims to test this out in practice and determined their possible effect on the brand equity of a personal athlete brand on social media.

Based on the previous body of research, an assumption was made in the current research that high levels of attractiveness, athletic performance, and marketable lifestyle will positively influence the brand equity of an athlete brand. However, different scenarios will be provided with levels of high and low in each of the three dimensions.

In this survey, a two-by-two-by-two design will be followed, so a total of eight scenarios will be provided to the respondents. The scenarios will look as follows:

1. **High** attractiveness, **high** athletic performance , **high** marketable lifestyle
2. **High** attractiveness, **high** athletic performance, **low** marketable lifestyle
3. **Low** attractiveness, **high** athletic performance, **high** marketable lifestyle
4. **Low** attractiveness, **high** athletic performance, **low** marketable lifestyle
5. **Low** attractiveness, **low** athletic performance, **low** marketable lifestyle
6. **High** attractiveness, **low** athletic performance, **highly** marketable lifestyle
7. **Low** attractiveness, **low** athletic performance, **highly** marketable lifestyle
8. **High** attractiveness, **low** athletic performance, **low** marketable lifestyle

3.1 Expectations

In line with research done by Arai et al. (2013), it can be expected that higher levels of attractiveness, athletic performance and marketable lifestyle will lead to a more positive and favorable athlete brand image.

H1: A) *An athlete's high level of attractiveness will positively influence brand image and a low level of attractiveness will negatively influence brand image.*

B) *An athlete's high level of athletic performance will positively influence brand image and a low level of athletic performance will negatively influence brand image.*

C) *An athlete's high level of marketable lifestyle will positively influence brand image and a low level of marketable lifestyle will negatively influence brand image.*

In terms of brand awareness, it is assumed that higher levels of the independent variables will lead to more positive word of mouth, as well as greater brand recall, which is in line with research conducted by Arai et al. (2013).

H2: A) *An athlete's high level of attractiveness will create positive word of mouth and greater brand recall and a low level of attractiveness will create a negative effect on word of mouth and less brand recall.*

B) *An athlete's high level of athletic performance will create positive word of mouth and greater brand recall and a low level of athletic performance will create a negative effect on word of mouth and less brand recall.*

C) *An athlete's high level of marketable lifestyle will create positive word of mouth and greater brand recall and a low level of marketable lifestyle will create a negative effect on word of mouth and less brand recall.*

Additionally, it is assumed that the higher levels of the independent variables will create a better image of the athlete as an endorser and create greater purchase intention.

H3: A) *An athlete's high level of attractiveness will create a more favorable image of an endorser of the athlete and positively affect purchase intention. A low level of attractiveness will create a less favorable endorser of the athlete and negatively affect purchase intention.*

B) *An athlete's high level of athletic performance will create a more favorable image of an endorser of the athlete and positively affect purchase intention. A low level of athletic performance will create a less favorable endorser of the athlete and negatively affect purchase intention.*

C) *An athlete's high level of marketable lifestyle will create a more favorable image of an endorser of the athlete and positively affect purchase intention. A low level of marketable*

lifestyle will create a less favorable endorser of the athlete and negatively affect purchase intention.

4. METHODOLOGY

The following section is an overview of the data collection process for this study. It will go over the sampling and data collection method, as well as describe and provide reasoning for the chosen measures and format of analysis of the data collected.

4.1 Research Method

Two of the dimensions created by Arai et al. (2014), attractiveness and marketable lifestyle, were pre-tested through their individual survey. 20 students were presented with eight different images of random and unknown athletes of each gender in order to prevent bias towards an already well-known athlete. Nine of the respondents were female, and 11 were male. 18 of the respondents were Finnish, and the remaining two filled out their nationality to be Polish and American. The ages of the respondent ranged from 18 to 22, and the average age was 20.8.

The pre-test respondents were then asked to rate these athletes purely on their physical attractiveness on a scale ranging from not so attractive to very attractive. Based on the results on the pre-test, two athletes of the same gender were picked for the study, one who got the highest rating in and another who got the lowest rating. The chosen images can be seen in the “Appendix” section of this paper along with the questions presented in the pre-test.

Additionally, seven different examples of a potentially marketable lifestyles athletes could portray on social media were presented to the same respondents. The examples were based on the research done by Arai et al. (2014), where they included different sub-dimensions in the marketable lifestyle dimension, where they considered marketable lifestyle to include the athlete’s life story, role-model like behavior and their relationship efforts. Based on this, examples like donating to charity, spreading awareness on social issues, interacting with fans and showcasing personal relationships were included. The respondents were asked to rate these examples based on how appealing these seem to

them on a scale from not at all appealing to very appealing. Again, two examples were chosen for the final study, one example that had the highest rating and another one with the lowest rating.

Athletic performance was narrowed down to simply winning and losing, winning insinuating high athletic performance and losing insinuating low athletic performance. The research done by Arai et al. (2014) included different sub-dimensions in the attractiveness-dimension, like rivalry and competition style, but for the sake of simplicity, the criteria was kept to simply winning or losing.

Based on the pre-testing, eight different scenarios were created, each with differing levels of attractiveness, marketable lifestyle and athletic performance. The varying levels of each dimension were outlined earlier.

Each scenario included all three dimension with the appropriate levels. The scenarios included either image of the athlete, along with a description. In this description, the athlete's performance and variations of the marketable lifestyle dimension were included. The athlete's in the scenarios were both potential soccer players, and their team's success was described in addition to details about the individuals athlete's performance. For team success or lack of, terms like "winning" or "losing" were used to distinguish high athletic performance from low. For the individual athlete, statistics of goal scoring were shared with the respondents. These either included the athlete scoring in all of the team's past five games that they had won, or that they hadn't scored all season. Also in the description was information regarding the marketable lifestyle dimension. As two lifestyle choices were picked based on the pre-test, either of them were used in the scenarios accordingly. The focus was on which kind of lifestyle the athlete was promoting on social media.

4.2 Data collection

Both the pre-test and the actual survey were conducted using the survey creation platform Webropol. The survey for the pre-test was sent on March 1st, and kept open for two days. As less extensive data collection was needed for this pre-testing, the survey was sent to a WhatsApp group including just Aalto University students. The main survey was sent out on March 7th, and data was collected for a duration of one week. The survey followed

convenience sampling and was sent out widely, mostly to university students. It was also shared on social media platforms, like Facebook and LinkedIn. There are certain limitations to this, but it is assumed to be acceptable as sports are of interest to no specific group and young adults are considered to be mass users of social media.

As there were eight different scenarios to be tested, a randomization method needed to be implemented. This was done by using birthdays. The year was divided into eight sections, starting with January 1st to February 15th, and respondents were asked to select which section their birthday belonged in. Based on their answer, the respondent was guided to the corresponding scenario. It cannot be guaranteed that equal statistical distribution was possible, but they were shared in a random manner.

4.3 Data measures

Most of the measures that were used in this research were borrowed or adopted from existing scales from previous research.

In order to test the effects on personal brand equity of the athlete, the respondents were asked questions relating to their thoughts and opinions regarding the athlete's brand image, which is a factor that makes up brand equity, as was outlined in the conceptual framework. Firstly, they were asked to rate how favorable and likable they viewed the athlete, as well as how positive or negative their view of them is using a five-point Likert-scale. This was done in order to test the effect of the different levels of the three independent variables on an athlete's overall brand image. The scale used for this was adapted from research done on consumer attitudes on brands by Kwon and Nayakankuppam (2015), and the scale was found reliable with an alpha score of 0.76.

Also relating to the brand image of the athlete, how the respondents viewed the athlete's endorser image was tested. To test this, a scale created by Gupta, Kishor and Verma (2017) was used, which had Cronbach's alpha scores ranging from 0.89 to 0.984, deeming it reliable. This used different adjectives to describe celebrity endorsers, like attractiveness and trustworthiness. Respondents were asked to rate six different qualities on a scale from very low to very high. Following up to this, purchase intention was tested,

where respondents were asked to rate how likely they would be to purchase products on social media in general promoted by influencers, as well as the probability they would purchase products promoted by the particular athlete. The scale created for this had a Cronbach's alpha score of $\alpha=0.861$, deeming it reliable.

Brand awareness and positive word-of-mouth were also tested using a five-point Likert-scale. Respondents were asked to rate the likelihood of different scenarios, like how likely it would be that they spoke positively about the athlete to others and how likely it would be that they would re-share the content posted by the athlete or recommend it to their friends. The scale was inspired from research done by Coulter and Grewal (2014), originally created to test willingness to purchase, but the format was adjusted to fit this topic of research. The scale was used in a few different studies by the authors, and they were found reliable with an Cronbach's alpha score ranging from 0.88 and 0.91. Once the scale was adjusted and questions was altered to fit the study, it had an Cronbach's alpha score of $\alpha=0.946$, deeming it very reliable.

The last two questions of the survey tested a crucial element of brand awareness, which is brand recall. To do this, respondents were asked to state the name of the athlete presented in the scenario as well as the sport they played. If they didn't remember, they could select the option "I don't recall". This scale had a Cronbach's alpha score of $\alpha=0.69$, deeming it fairly reliable.

4.4 Data analysis

To analyze the collected data, the SPSS 27.0 program was utilized. The hypothesis were tested using ANOVA testing, where the relationship between the different variables was analyzed and recognized.

5. FINDINGS

The following section will go over the findings that were discovered based on the quantitative data collected from the survey and its respondents.

5.1 Participants

The survey conducted was answered by a total of 170 respondents. Of the respondents, 83 were female and 85 were male, while one selected “other” and one “prefer not to say”.

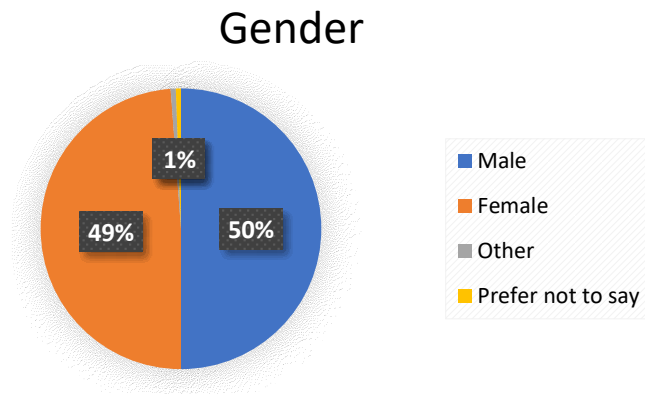


Figure 2. Gender frequencies

Out of the sample, the ages varied between 18-64, the median being 22 and the average age being 26.89.

The respondents included 159 Finnish people (94%) and 11 who selected the option “other” (6) for their nationality. This included the following nationalities: Polish, Estonian, Indian, Finnish/Swedish, and American.

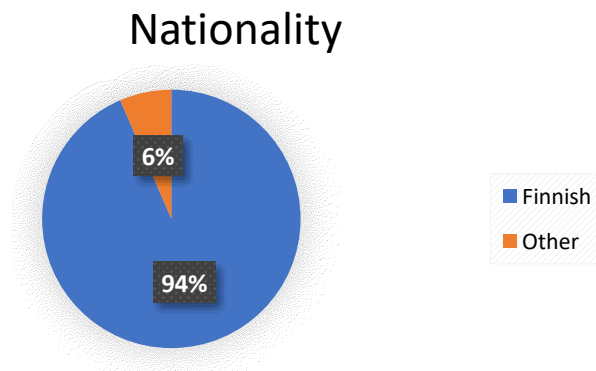


Figure 3 . Nationality frequencies

5.2 Scenario distribution

<i>Independent variables</i>	<i>Levels</i>	<i>Number of respondents</i>
<i>Attractiveness</i>	Low	94
	High	76
<i>Athletic performance</i>	Low	89
	High	81
<i>Marketable lifestyle</i>	Low	81
	High	89

Figure 4. Scenario distribution amongst respondents

In order to distinguish the different levels of high and low for each independent variable, the value zero was used to refer to “low” levels and one was used to describe “high” levels in their presence in each scenario in order to code the appropriate questions together on SPSS.

The distribution of the scenarios was found to be somewhat unequal. As can be seen in the figure, the scenarios with “high attractiveness” got the least amount of respondents (76), as ones with “low attractiveness” got the most amount of respondents (94). The rest of the variables had quite an even distribution. This was to be expected, as the scenarios were presented on a randomization method, so without a more controlled environment for data collection, one cannot assume each scenario would get the same number of respondents. This can be seen as a limitation to the study, but not something that would present the results as unreliable.

In terms of the demographic variables, most of the respondents were Finnish, which made the distribution of the scenarios in terms of nationality also unequal. The possible limitations of this will be discussed in later sections.

5.3 Brand image

Next, the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable of brand image will be looked at. These were tested by asking three different questions relating to brand image, discussing favorability, likeability and whether a positive or negative image was perceived of the athlete. As the three measurements were used in previous studies to test consumer attitudes towards a brand and how it was portrayed, the three questions could be combined to create a 3-item scale measuring overall brand image. The scale ranged from one to five, a higher number meaning a more positive rating in terms on brand image. To collect this data, a three-way between-subjects ANOVA test was conducted on SPSS, as there are two levels to each of the three independent variables.

The results of the test show the statistical significance each independent variable has on the dependent variable. It was found that attractiveness had a significant effect on brand image at the $p < 0.05$ level as $F(1, 9.541) = 0.002$. The effects of athletic performance $F(1, 81.963) = 0.000$ and marketable lifestyle $F(1, 79.690) = 0.000$ were also found to be significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. What is interesting here is that if we compared the F-value of all three, we can see that the effect of attractiveness was far less dominant on brand image than the other two variables, as the F-value is far lower. The effect of all three variables together $F(1, 0.215) = 0.644$ were found to have no significant effect on brand image.

Based on the estimate marginal means, the effect of the high and low levels of each independent variable on brand image can be analyzed. High attractiveness had an overall mean of ($M=3.634$, $SD= 0.81947$) and low attractiveness had an overall mean of ($M=3.245$, $SD= 0.81441$). High athletic performance had an overall mean of ($M=4.009$, $SD= 0.891$) and low athletic performance had an overall mean of ($M=2.869$, $SD= 0.82076$). High marketable lifestyle had an overall mean of ($M=4.001$, $SD= 0.81132$) and low marketable lifestyle had an overall mean of ($M=2.877$, $SD= 0.828$). These numbers show that there is a slight difference between the effect of each level of the independent variables on brand image. They also show that high athletic performance and high marketable lifestyle had a greatest effect on creating a positive brand image, as their means were the closest to five on the scale. They also had the biggest difference between the means of the two levels.

<i>IV</i>	<i>Levels</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>
<i>Attractiveness</i>	Low	94	3.245	0.81441	0.084
	High	76	3.634	0.81947	0.094
<i>Athletic performance</i>	Low	89	2.869	0.82076	0.087
	High	81	4.009	0.891	0.091
<i>Marketable lifestyle</i>	Low	81	2.877	0.828	0.092
	High	89	4.001	0.81132	0.086

Figure 5. Effect of IVs on brand image

5.3.1 Endorser image

An additional measure was added to relate to the dependent variable of brand image, which was to see how the respondents would view the athlete's endorser image. The scale ranged from one to five, a higher number meaning that the respondent ranked the athlete higher as a potential endorser.

A three-way between-subjects ANOVA test was conducted on SPSS. The results of the test show the statistical significance each independent variable has on the athlete's endorser image. It was found that attractiveness had a significant on the athlete endorser image at the $p < 0.05$ level as $F(1, 13.516) = 0.000$. The effects of athletic performance $F(1, 77.960) = 0.000$ and marketable lifestyle $F(1, 72.669) = 0.000$ were also found to be significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. If we compared the F-value of all three again, we can see that the effect of attractiveness was far less dominant on the athlete endorser image than the other two variables, as the F-value is far lower. The effect of all three variables together $F(1, 0.042) = 0.839$ were found to have no significant effect on the athlete endorser image.

Based on the estimate marginal means, the effect of the high and low levels of each independent variable on the athlete endorser image can be analyzed. High attractiveness had an overall mean of ($M=3.348$, $SD= 0.74973$) and low attractiveness had an overall

mean of (M=2.922, SD= 0.74654). High athletic performance had an overall mean of (M=3.646, SD= 0.747) and low athletic performance had an overall mean of (M=2.624, SD= 0.75471). High marketable lifestyle had an overall mean of (M=3.628, SD= 0.74528) and low marketable lifestyle had an overall mean of (M=2.642, SD= 0.756). These numbers show that there is a slight difference between the effect of each level of the independent variables on the athlete endorser image, and the trend was that respondents rated the athlete as a better endorser when the independent variables were ranked as “high”. They also show that high athletic performance and high marketable lifestyle had a greatest effect on creating a positive athlete endorser image, as their means were the closest to five on the scale.

IV	Levels	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Attractiveness	Low	94	2.922	0.74654	0.077
	High	76	3.348	0.74973	0.086
Athletic performance	Low	89	2.624	0.75471	0.080
	High	81	3.646	0.747	0.083
Marketable lifestyle	Low	81	2.642	0.756	0.084
	High	89	3.628	0.74528	0.079

Figure 6. Effect of IVs on endorser image

Relating to the qualities the athlete would have as an endorser, the purchase intention of respondents if this athlete was endorsing a product was tested. A three-way between-subjects ANOVA test was conducted on SPSS. The scale ranged from one to five, a higher number meaning that the respondent was more likely to purchase items promoted by the athlete endorser. The results of the test show the statistical significance each independent variable has on the purchase intention of consumers. It was found that attractiveness had no significant effect on the purchase intention at the $p < 0.05$ level as $F(1, 4.645) = 0.033$. The effects of athletic performance $F(1, 11.708) = 0.001$ and marketable lifestyle $F(1, 17.900) = 0.000$ were found to be significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. The effect of all three variables together $F(1, 0.145) = 0.704$ were found to have no significant effect on the purchase intention.

Based on the estimate marginal means, the effect of the high and low levels of each independent variable on the purchase intention can be analyzed. Attractiveness had no statistically significant effect on purchase intention, but results for the marginal means are included here. High attractiveness had an overall mean of (M=2.518, SD= 0.83690) and low attractiveness had an overall mean of (M=2.240, SD= 0.83380). High athletic performance had an overall mean of (M=2.599, SD= 0.0.837) and low athletic performance had an overall mean of (M=2.159, SD= 0.83962). High marketable lifestyle had an overall mean of (M=2.651, SD= 0.83019) and low marketable lifestyle had an overall mean of (M=2.106, SD= 0.846). These numbers show that there is a slight difference between the effect of each level of the independent variables on the purchase intention of the respondents, and the trend was that respondents were more likely to buy products promote by the athlete when the independent variables were ranked as “high”. They also show that high athletic performance and high marketable lifestyle had a greatest effect on purchase intention, as their means were the closest to five on the scale.

<i>IV</i>	<i>Levels</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>
<i>Attractiveness</i>	Low	94	2.240	0.83380	0.086
	High	76	2.518	0.83690	0.096
<i>Athletic performance</i>	Low	89	2.159	0.83962	0.089
	High	81	2.599	0.837	0.093
<i>Marketable lifestyle</i>	Low	81	2.106	0.846	0.094
	High	89	2.651	0.83019	0.088

Figure 7. Effect on IVs on purchase intention

5.4 Brand awareness

Next, the data representing the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable of brand awareness will be presented and discussed.

5.4.1 Word of Mouth

The first aspect of brand awareness that was tested was word of mouth (WOM). To test this, respondents were presented with a question with a 5-item scale. A five-point scale was used to measure this variable, where one meant “very unlikely” and five meant “very likely”.

To analyze the main effect of attractiveness, athletic performance, and marketable lifestyle on WOM, a three-way between subjects ANOVA was completed. It was found that there was a significant effect of attractiveness on WOM at the $p < 0.05$ level as $F(1, 11.674) = 0.001$. The effects of athletic performance $F(1, 72.584) = 0.000$ and marketable lifestyle $F(1, 83.095) = 0.000$ were found to be significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. What is interesting here is that if we compared the F-value of all three, we can see that the effect of attractiveness was far less dominant on WOM than the other two variables, as the F-value is far lower. The effect of all three variables together $F(1, 0.137) = 0.712$ were found to have no significant effect on WOM.

Based on the estimate marginal means, the effect of the high and low levels of each independent variable on WOM can be analyzed. High attractiveness had an overall mean of ($M=2.964$, $SD= 0.82819$) and low attractiveness had an overall mean of ($M=2.531$, $SD= 0.81441$). High athletic performance had an overall mean of ($M=3.287$, $SD= 0.891$) and low athletic performance had an overall mean of ($M=2.207$, $SD= 0.83019$). High marketable lifestyle had an overall mean of ($M=3.325$, $SD= 0.82076$) and low marketable lifestyle had an overall mean of ($M=2.169$, $SD= 0.828$). These numbers show that there is a slight difference between the effect of each level of the variable on WOM. The most significant difference can be seen between the high and low levels of athletic performance and marketable lifestyle.

<i>IV</i>	<i>Levels</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>
<i>Attractiveness</i>	Low	94	2.531	0.81441	0.084
	High	76	2.964	0.82819	0.095
<i>Athletic performance</i>	Low	89	2.207	0.83019	0.088
	High	81	3.287	0.891	0.091
<i>Marketable lifestyle</i>	Low	81	2.169	0.828	0.092
	High	89	3.325	0.82076	0.087

Figure 8. Effect of IVs on word of mouth

5.4.2 Brand recall

To analyze the main effect of attractiveness, athletic performance, and marketable lifestyle on brand recall, a three-way between subjects ANOVA was completed. It was found that there was no significant effect of attractiveness on brand recall at the $p < 0.05$ level as $F(1, 6.811) = 0.010$. The effects of athletic performance $F(1, 13.757) = 0.000$ and marketable lifestyle $F(1, 30.614) = 0.000$ were found to be significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. The effect of all three variables together $F(1, 1.635) = 0.203$ were found to have no significant effect on brand recall.

The scale for brand recall had the value “1” representing positive brand recall, so the respondent recalled the name and sport of the athlete. The value “2” represented negative brand recall, so the respondent recalled neither the name or the sport of the athlete. Although it was found that attractiveness didn’t have a statistically significant effect, it is still included here. High attractiveness ($M = 1.223$, $SD = 0.33914$) compared to low attractiveness ($M = 1.358$, $SD = 0.33914$) show that high levels of attractiveness created for better brand recall, as the mean value was lower, so closer to one. The same can be said when comparing high athletic performance ($M = 1.195$, $SD = 0.333$) and low athletic performance ($M = 1.147$, $SD = 0.3396$), as well as high marketable lifestyle ($M = 1.147$, $SD = 0.33010$) and low marketable lifestyle ($M = 1.433$, $SD = 0.342$).

IV	Levels	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error
Attractiveness	Low	94	1.358	0.32964	0.034
	High	76	1.223	0.33914	0.039
Athletic performance	Low	89	1.386	0.3396	0.036
	High	81	1.195	0.333	0.037
Marketable lifestyle	Low	81	1.433	0.342	0.038
	High	89	1.147	0.33010	0.035

Figure 9. Effect of IVs on brand recall

6. DISCUSSION

In the following section, the results of the study will be discussed in relation to the stated hypothesis.

6.1 Effects on brand image

The expectations for this study were that high levels of attractiveness, athletic performance and marketable lifestyle would create a better athlete brand image. The first hypothesis was therefore divided into three parts:

- H1: A)** *An athlete's high level of attractiveness will positively influence brand image and a low level of attractiveness will negatively influence brand image.*
- B)** *An athlete's high level of athletic performance will positively influence brand image and a low level of athletic performance will negatively influence brand image.*
- C)** *An athlete's high level of marketable lifestyle will positively influence brand image and a low level of marketable lifestyle will negatively influence brand image.*

It was found that attractiveness ($F(1, 9.541) = 0.002$), athletic performance ($F(1, 81.963) = 0.000$), and marketable lifestyle ($F(1, 79.690) = 0.000$) all had a statistically significant effect on brand image at the $p < 0.05$ level. When comparing the low and high levels of each variable, the high levels of each had a greater estimated mean value, which meant that the respondents ranked the athlete to have a better and more positive brand image when

attractiveness, marketable lifestyle and athletic performance were ranked as high. Therefore, as there are differences in the mean values between high and low variables and they were proved statistically significant, H1 as a whole can be accepted

An additional variable that was tested in relation to the brand image of the athlete was the respondents view of them as a endorser and how likely they would be to purchase products promoted by the athlete. The following three-part hypothesis was created for this variable:

H3: A) *An athlete's high level of attractiveness will create a more favorable image of an endorser of the athlete and positively affect purchase intention. A low level of attractiveness will create a less favorable endorser of the athlete and negatively affect purchase intention.*

B) *An athlete's high level of athletic performance will create a more favorable image of an endorser of the athlete and positively affect purchase intention. A low level of athletic performance will create a less favorable endorser of the athlete and negatively affect purchase intention.*

C) *An athlete's high level of marketable lifestyle will create a more favorable image of an endorser of the athlete and positively affect purchase intention. A low level of marketable lifestyle will create a less favorable endorser of the athlete and negatively affect purchase intention.*

Attractiveness $F(1, 13.516) = 0.000$, athletic performance $F(1, 77.960) = 0.000$ and marketable lifestyle $F(1, 72.669) = 0.000$ were all found to be statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ level. When comparing the estimated means between high and low levels of all three independent variables and how they effected how respondent's viewed the athlete as a potential endorser, they were ranked higher when the independent variable was high compared to when it was low. This means that a high level of any of the independent variables meant that respondents viewed the athlete as a more favorable endorser compared to when any of the independent variables were low.

In terms of purchase intention, it was found that attractiveness had no significant effect on the purchase intention at the $p < 0.05$ level as $F(1, 4.645) = 0.033$. The effects of athletic performance $F(1, 11.708) = 0.001$ and marketable lifestyle $F(1, 17.900) = 0.000$ were

found to be significant. Looking at the estimated means again, the value was greater for high levels of the independent variables than for the low levels. This means that respondents would be more likely to purchase products endorsed by the athlete when athletic performance and marketable lifestyle were high compared to when they were low. What should be noticed here is that even though the estimated means were greater at high levels, the difference wasn't large and the value was still below three, which is still considered to be quite a low ranking in the scale that was used.

As the effect of attractiveness on purchase intention was found to be statistically insignificant, as it's written, H3 part A needs to be rejected, even though the effect on endorser image was found significant. Parts B and C can be accepted, as the effect of athletic performance and marketable lifestyle were found to be statistically significant and the differences in the means suggested that high levels of each created for a more favorable athlete endorser and positively affected the likelihood of purchasing products endorsed by the athlete.

6.2 Effects on brand awareness

A three-part hypothesis was also made for testing brand awareness. Essentially, the expectations were that when attractiveness, athletic performance and marketable lifestyle were high, they would create more positive word of mouth and a greater likelihood for brand recall.

H2: A) *An athlete's high level of attractiveness will create positive word of mouth and greater brand recall and a low level of attractiveness will create negative word of mouth and less brand recall.*

B) *An athlete's high level of athletic performance will create positive word of mouth and greater brand recall and a low level of athletic performance will create negative word of mouth and less brand recall.*

C) *An athlete's high level of marketable lifestyle will create positive word of mouth and greater brand recall and a low level of marketable lifestyle will create negative word of mouth and less brand recall.*

In terms of word of mouth (WOM), it was found that there was a statistically significant effect of attractiveness $F(1, 11.674) = 0.001$, athletic performance $F(1, 72.584) = 0.000$, and marketable lifestyle $F(1, 83.095) = 0.000$ at the $p < 0.05$ level on WOM. The high levels again tested for a larger estimated mean than the low levels, meaning that respondents were more likely to speak positively of the athlete when attractiveness, athletic performance, and marketable lifestyle were ranked as high, rather than when they were ranked as low. This means that there was more positive WOM with the presence of high levels of the independent variable in the scenario.

Looking at brand recall, attractiveness $F(1, 6.811) = 0.010$ had no significant effect on brand recall at the $p < 0.05$ level. The effects of athletic performance $F(1, 13.757) = 0.000$ and marketable lifestyle $F(1, 30.614) = 0.000$ were found to be significant. Once again, the trend of the estimated means showed that when the level of the independent variable was high, the respondent was more likely to recall the athlete rather than when it was low. This means that there was greater brand recall with the presence of high levels of the independent variables in the scenario.

When looking at the hypothesis, as it, H2 part A cannot be accepted as it is, as the effect of attractiveness was found to be statistically insignificant towards brand recall. The remaining two variables were found to have a significant effect, and the differences in the means outline that WOM was more positive and brand recall was greater when the levels of the independent variables were high compared to when they were low, so H2 part B and part C can be accepted.

7 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Main findings

The main findings of the study outline the effects of high and low levels of attractiveness, athletic performance, and marketable lifestyle on an athlete's personal brand equity, consisting of brand image and brand awareness.

Athletic performance and marketable lifestyle were both found to have a statistically significant effect on brand image and brand awareness, and therefore on the personal brand equity of the athlete. The overall trend within the estimated means that were presented showed that high levels of both athletic performance and marketable lifestyle led to the respondents rating the athlete's brand image more positively, were more likely to spread more positive word of mouth, as well as they were more likely to recall the athlete compared to low levels of the two variables.

Attractiveness turned out to have a positive effect on the brand image of the athlete and on the endorser image. As there was no effect of attractiveness on brand recall or purchase intention, H2 part A and H3 part A had to be rejected. This means that the neither high or low levels of attractiveness had a positive nor a negative effect on their purchase intention, but they did have an effect on endorser image. The effects of high and low levels of attractiveness didn't have a statistically significant effect on brand recall, but they did have an effect on word of mouth.

What can be concluded from this is that the independent variable of attractiveness had less effect on the personal brand equity of an athlete than athletic performance and marketable lifestyle. Looking at the F-values given from the ANOVA testing, marketable lifestyle and athletic performance always had a much greater F-value, meaning their effect was greater on the respondents' answers. This means that respondents put less value on the physical appearance of the athlete and find the other two variables much more important in terms of what athletes show on social media and how this shapes their personal brand.

7.2 Implications for International Business

As has been discussed in the literature review, the topic of athlete branding and its benefits are becoming more prevalent topics, and athletes and their managers are increasingly starting to see the value that a strong personal athlete brand can hold. The model athlete brand image framework created by Arai et al. (2014) provided a basis for agents and managers of what are the possible different dimensions of an athlete brand, so

attractiveness, athletic performance and marketable lifestyle, and encouraged for the reflection and manipulation of these dimensions of individual athletes in order to create an overall more attractive brand. What was missing and what this research hoped to discover, was how the manipulation of these three dimensions can be of actual benefit to the personal brand equity of a brand.

Overall, this study brings new insights into personal branding, what works and what doesn't. Based on the results of this research, if managers or agents are looking for ways to improve their athlete brand, reflection and assessment of these three dimension can be beneficial. As has been shown, attractiveness, winning and portraying a lifestyle that consumers find favorable can positively affect how they view the athlete and increase the likelihood of recall and spreading a positive message relating to the athlete. As brand equity relies strongly on the emotions and thoughts of the consumers, a more positive way of thinking towards an athlete can therefore be of value to the athlete brand by bringing in more favorability and loyalty between a potential fan and the athlete. The effect of attractiveness overall on the dependent variables was found less dominant, which can be a good thing, as it is possibly the hardest dimension out of the three to start changing. One might think that it is good and healthy that physical appearance isn't what determines your success.

Additionally, with sponsorships and endorsements being a prevalent source of income for many athletes, it was proved that attractiveness, athletic performance, and marketable lifestyle can create for a more attractive endorser image, therefore making the athlete more attractive to sponsors. As was proven, the purchase intention was effected by only athletic performance and marketable lifestyle, and the purchase intention towards a potential product endorsed by the athlete will also be greater.

Brand awareness is another key element of brand equity. Especially when it comes to social media, posts are easily shared between users and the potential for high levels of engagement are apparent. This makes it a useful platform for an athlete to gain brand awareness, but it can also be risky. This is when positive word of mouth is key, as users are finding an athlete's account based on what they have heard from others or seen a post of theirs that has been shared, liked or commented on by many. As has been proven by this research, when attractiveness, athletic performance and marketable lifestyle are high,

word of mouth will be greater and more positive. Brand recall will be greater when athletic performance and marketable lifestyle are high, so people will have a higher likelihood of remembering the athlete, which increases brand awareness. On social media where there are millions of users and millions of new posts per day, brand awareness can be a crucial factor for an athlete to be noticed. So in terms of the field of social media marketing, this study provides insight into navigating the content that should be posted in order to be well received by consumers.

For marketers, this study provides reason to not only understand the value of social media in branding, but also make themselves more accessible to athletes that have a strong presence and brand on social media. Athlete endorsements can be highly successful for brands, as was discussed in the literature review, and brands should take advantage of the value that athlete endorsements can bring. Athletes should also start looking more closely at their representation on social media, or start thinking of building a presence on there if so far it is nonexistent. A good brand strategy can increase the credibility the athlete has as well as build the connection with their fans. The success good branding can bring is something that not only athletes can capitalize off of during their career, but also after. It can make them more attractive to sponsors, therefore being a valuable source of income in addition to their sport. Managers of athletes should also encourage building a strategy for the athlete's personal brand, and provide insight on the value that branding can bring to public figure, which is what most athletes are or what some can become.

7.3 Limitations

As with most research, this study had some limitations.

In general, as the research was limited to feature a female athlete and only one sport, the results cannot be necessarily generalized to have the same effect on all athletes or all sports. Most of the respondents were also Finnish, so it cannot be assumed what the results would look like if the geographical location or population was different. Resolutions to both of these limitations can be provided by future research by expanding the scope to athletes of varying sports and genders, and attempt to gather the insights regarding athlete brands on a more global scale.

In addition, the scenarios that were created were artificial and manipulated to fit the low and high levels. Survey respondents could not observe real and natural athletes, so one cannot say for sure that the results would be the same under real world circumstances. A resolution to this for a larger scale future research could be to evaluate real athlete brands on social media instead of fictitious ones.

When testing brand awareness, brand recall and word of mouth were looked at. Another important element of brand awareness is brand recognition, which was touched upon in the literature review but not used as a variable in data collection, as it proved to be difficult to test with fictional athlete brands. However, for real life brands it is a valuable factor of brand awareness and should be included when assessing one's brand equity.

Another limitation to this study was that even though questions regarding monitoring variables were included in the survey, the data collected didn't end up to be analyzed due to time restrictions. The behavior and opinions of consumers and their effect on how they possibly perceive another person, like an athlete, could therefore be of interest to future researchers.

7.4 Suggestions for future research

As the time frame for this study was limited, there are multiple suggestion of areas that future research could explore.

As only female athletes were used in this study to represent both levels of each independent variable, future research could consider using male athletes and seeing if gender of the athlete could have a potential effect on how they are received by others. Male sports tend to have much more viewers and popularity than female sports, so the involvement of the fans can be seen as greater, so it could be interesting to see if this would have an effect on the efficiency of the independent variables. The same could be said for the sport that was chosen, and upcoming research could explore if these effect of these variables vary depending of the sport. The sports industry still faces quite a bit of inequality between men and women, so investigating the differences of the effectiveness of personal branding in both men and women could be a significant area of research.

The concept of personal branding isn't only limited to the sports industry, so future research could indulge on different industries, like music, to see if personal branding plays a key role for individual success.

As endorser image and purchase intention was only looked at briefly, future research could extend on this by digging deeper into the qualities athlete's should have as endorsers, and possibly how the relationship between athletes and fans can affect their credibility as endorsers.

Furthermore, the effects of different social media platforms could be a potential area of research. This research looked at athlete content posted on social media in general and how attractiveness, athletic performance and marketable lifestyle presented on social media is perceived by viewers. As new forms of social media are emerging regularly, it could be of interest to analyze if one platform is more favorable than another, or if the new trend of short-form videos could be of greater benefit than the more traditional content.

Finally, the levels of each independent variable were only high and low. If a larger scale experiment was made, different levels of each could be created and their effect analyzed. Also, other elements to an athlete brand could be added, or the three presented here could be narrowed down to more specific features. This would allow more scenarios with greater uniqueness, possibly creating for more reliability regarding the true dimensions of an athlete brand. Relating to this, different dependent variables could be explored, as branding is an extensive topic and includes a lot more areas for research than brand image and awareness.

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9. APPENDIX

Appendix A: Pre-test

Survey questions

On this page, you are presented with different varieties of an athlete's off-field behavior, so things they do outside of playing a sport. These would be showcased on the social media profiles of the athletes. Please rate each of them in terms of how appealing you would find these qualities in an athlete.

(All measured on a scale of not very appealing to very appealing)

1. Contributions to charity (donations, volunteering, etc.)
2. Spreading awareness on important issues (climate change, CSR, education, etc.).
3. Voicing their opinion on societal/political matters.
4. Sharing personal stories.
5. Sharing personal relationships
6. Expressing personal values/ethical beliefs.
7. Interaction with fans via social media

Please rate the individual athlete's physical attractiveness.

(All measured on a scale of not very attractive to very attractive)



Figure 10: Photograph of male athlete (Pexels, 2020).



Figure 11: Photograph of female athlete (Pexels, 2020).



Figure 12: Photograph of male athlete (Pexels, 2019).



Figure 13: Photograph of female athlete (Pexels, 2019).



Figure 14: Photograph of female athlete (Pexels, 2020).



Figure 15: Photograph of male athlete (Pexels, 2018)



Figure 16: Photograph of male athlete (Pexels, 2016)



Figure 17: Photograph of female athlete (Pexels, 2020)

Appendix B: Main survey

Scenarios (attractiveness, athletic performance, marketable lifestyle):

Scenario 1(high, high, high): Maria is a young aspiring soccer player, who has been performing very well lately. Her team is currently on a five-game winning streak and Maria has scored in each of those games. Besides being a better-than-average athlete, she is greatly involved with several social causes and frequently discusses and encourages contributions to these causes on her social media platforms. In addition, she also speaks out about important global issues, like global warming and women's rights.



Figure 18: Photograph of female athlete (Pexels, 2020)

Scenario 2 (low, low, low): Emma is a young, aspiring soccer player who has been struggling to perform well lately. Her team has lost the last seven games and Emma hasn't scored a goal all season, therefore she has been benched (not playing) for the last three games. Emma is active on social media, where she posts photos of her friends and family but mostly expresses her political opinions and views, which can be viewed as controversial by some.



Figure 19: Photograph of female athlete (Pexels, 2020)

Scenario 3 (high, high, low): Maria is a young aspiring soccer player who has been performing very well lately. Her team is currently on a five-game winning streak and Maria has scored in each of those games. Besides being a better-than-average athlete, she is very active on social media, where she mostly posts photos of her friends and family and consistently showcases her political views and opinions, which can be seen as controversial by some.



Figure 20: Photograph of female athlete (Pexels, 2020)

Scenario 4 (low, high, high): Emma is a young and aspiring football player, who has performed very well this season. Her team is currently on a five-game winning streak and Emma has scored in each of those games. Besides being a better-than-average athlete, she is greatly involved with several social causes and frequently discusses and encourages contributions to these causes on her social media platforms. In addition, she also speaks out about important global issues, like global warming and women's rights.



Figure 21: Photograph of female athlete (Pexels, 2020)

Scenario 5 (high, low, high): Maria is a young and aspiring soccer player, who has really struggled this season and not played her best. Her team has lost the last seven games and Maria hasn't scored a goal all season, therefore she has been benched (not playing) for the last three games. Apart from her under-performing, she is greatly involved with several social causes and frequently discusses and encourages contributions to these causes on her social media platforms. In addition, she also speaks out about important global issues, like global warming and women's rights.



Figure 22: Photograph of female athlete (Pexels, 2020)

Scenario 6 (low, low, high): Emma is a young and aspiring soccer player, who has really struggled this season and not played her best. Her team has lost the last 7 games and Emma hasn't scored at all this season, leading to her being benched (not playing) for the last three games. Apart from her under-performing, she is greatly involved with several social causes and frequently discusses and encourages contributions to these causes on her social media platforms. In addition, she also speaks out about important global issues, like global warming and women's rights.



Figure 23: Photograph of female athlete (Pexels, 2020)

Scenario 7 (high, low, low): Maria is a young and aspiring soccer player, who has struggled to perform well lately. Her team has lost the last seven games and Maria hasn't scored a goal all season, therefore she has been benched (not playing) for the last three games. In addition to her under-performing, she has been very active on social media lately, where she mostly posts photos of her friends and family and has consistently expressed her political views and opinions, which can be seen as controversial by some.



Figure 24: Photograph of female athlete (Pexels, 2020)

Scenario 8 (low, high, low): Emma is a young and aspiring football player, who has played exceptionally this season. Her team is currently on a five-game winning streak and Emma has scored in each of those games. Apart from being an above-average athlete, she has been very active on social media, where she mostly posts photos of her friends and family and consistently expresses her political views and opinions, which can be seen as controversial by some.



Figure 25: Photograph of female athlete (Pexels, 2020)

Survey questions

1. Please indicate your interest in soccer versus other sports:
 - a. I am interested in soccer more than any other sport.
 - b. Soccer is one of the sports I'm most interested in.
 - c. Soccer is no more interesting than any other sport.
 - d. I'm not interested in soccer.
2. How frequently do you watch soccer?
 - a. Few times a week
 - b. Few times a month
 - c. Few times a year
 - d. Never
3. Please rate the following statements (strongly disagree/ strongly agree):
 - a. I enjoy soccer matches.
 - b. I frequently follow soccer news.
4. Please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements (strongly disagree/strongly agree)
 - a. I am involved in different causes for charity.

- b. I am concerned about global warming.
 - c. I have strong opinions regarding gender equality.
 - d. I am overall concerned and invested in social issues.
 - e. I think it is important to spread awareness about social issues.
 - f. I have strong political beliefs I openly express.
 - g. I look up to those who actively contribute to different causes and spread awareness about critical social and global issues.
5. Please indicate how competitive you are as a person (slider scale 0-10).
6. Please rate how often you use social media (slider scale rarely (0) to often (10)).
7. Do you follow any athletes on social media?
- a. Yes
 - b. No
8. IF YES TO PREVIOUS QUESTION: What is your overall rating of content posted by athletes on social media? (slider scale not at all enjoyable (0) to very enjoyable (10))
9. When is your birthday?
- a. Between January 1st and February 15th
 - b. Between February 16th and March 31st
 - c. Between April 1st and May 15th
 - d. Between May 16th and June 30th
 - e. Between July 1st and August 15th
 - f. Between August 16th and September 30th
 - g. Between October 1st and November 15th
 - h. Between November 16th and December 31st

Corresponding scenario presented based on their choice above

18. How favorable do you find this athlete?
- a. Very unfavorable
 - b. Somewhat unfavorable
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat favorable
 - e. Very favorable

19. How likable is this athlete?
- a. Very unlikable
 - b. Somewhat unlikable
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat likable
 - e. Very likable
20. How positive/negative is your image of this athlete?
- a. Very negative
 - b. Somewhat negative
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Somewhat positive
 - e. Very positive
21. How likely would it be that...: (from very unlikely to very likely)
- a. you spoke positively about this athlete to others?
 - b. you shared content posted by this athlete to your friends?
 - c. you shared content posted by this athlete to your won page?
 - d. you would engage (follow/like/comment) with this athlete on social media?
 - e. you would recommend their account for your friends to follow?
22. If this athlete was endorsing a product, how would rate these qualities they would have as an endorser? (from very low to very high)
- a. Attractiveness
 - b. Sincerity
 - c. Trustworthiness
 - d. Knowledgeability
 - e. Expertise
 - f. Qualification
23. How likely would it be that...: (from very unlikely to very likely)
- a. you would purchase products promoted on social media in general?
 - b. you would purchase products promoted by influencers?
 - c. you would look for products endorsed by specific people on social media?
24. How likely would it be that...: (from very unlikely to very likely)
- a. you would purchase products endorsed by this athlete?
 - b. you would actively look for products this athlete endorses?
25. What was the name on the athlete in the scenario?

- a. *respondent fills in name*
 - b. I don't recall
- 26. What sport do they play?
 - a. *respondent fills in sport*
 - b. I don't recall
- 27. What is your age?
- 28. What is your gender?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male
 - c. Other
 - d. Prefer not to say
- 29. What is your nationality?
 - a. Finnish
 - b. Other